

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001127

SIPDIS

NOFORN

DEPT FOR EUR/WE AND EUR/ERA, USEU FOR MEZNAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/01/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IT](#) [EUN](#) [ITALIAN](#) [POLITICS](#) [ITALY](#) [NATIONAL](#) [ELECTIONS](#)

SUBJECT: EU COMMISSIONER FRATTINI PREDICTS BIG CABINET  
SHAKEUP (INCLUDING HIS OWN RETURN TO ROME) FOR SECOND  
BERLUSCONI ADMINISTRATION

REF: ROME 1058

Classified By: A/DCM TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON:1.4 (B)(D)

-----  
BERLUSCONI II  
-----

1. (C/NOFORN) During Ambassador Sembler's April 1 farewell courtesy call, EU Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs (and former Italian FM) Franco Frattini (strictly protect) predicted that PM Berlusconi's program of tax cuts and infrastructure improvements would win his center-right coalition a second mandate in the spring 2006 elections. The left, and its leader Romano Prodi, represent "old-style thinking," are losing popularity, cannot communicate effectively, and have neither vision nor enthusiasm. Frattini confided that Berlusconi would undertake a "broad reshuffle" of his cabinet to "renew" his second government and give it "fresh impetus." Berlusconi may even announce some of the changes just prior to the elections. Frattini confided that he would return to Rome if Berlusconi wins the elections, but that this information was, at the moment, secret.

SIPDIS

2. (C) Frattini also predicted that a center-right victory at the polls would result in either PM senior advisor Gianni Letta or Chamber of Deputies President Pier Fernando Casini being selected President of the Republic in May 2006 by the next Parliament. A center-left victory would likely result in former PM Giuliano Amato as President. Frattini noted that Letta would win the support of many on the left, and that while Berlusconi would be reluctant to give up Letta's day-to-day counsel, the PM would value having "such a close friend" in the Quirinale. Frattini was not quite as confident about the center-right's results for this weekend's regional elections. He predicted that the right would win six or seven of the 14 regions in play, including Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto, Lazio, Puglia and Calabria. (Note: The center-right currently holds eight regions.)

-----  
BRUSSELS PRIORITIES - IMMIGRATION  
-----

3. (C) In Brussels, he and his Commission will continue to focus on issues of critical concern to both the US and EU, including transportation security and a visa regime. On May 4 his office will release the first ever EU policy paper on immigration and border control. The document will call for more north-south cooperation on immigration, refugee and asylum issues so that Mediterranean countries do not continue to bear a disproportionate share of the burden. It will also outline proposals for more third-country involvement on interdiction, as well as repatriation and resettlement of illegal immigrants.

-----  
VISA WAIVER-BIOMETRICS  
-----

4. (SBU) The Ambassador handed Frattini a copy of House Judiciary Chairman Sensenbrenner's response to his letter asking for a nine month extension of the deadline for implementing the USG requirement that passports issued after October 26 held by Visa Waiver program travelers must have an embedded biometric chip. Frattini had not seen the response, and did not react to Sensenbrenner's view that an extension was "unlikely" except to say that many countries are experiencing "financial constraints" in their attempts to make the deadline. Frattini plans to travel to the US in June, but did not indicate he would meet with US lawmakers to discuss this issue. The details of his visit are being worked out by the Italian Embassy, but it will definitely include a speech at Georgetown University.

5. (C/NOFORN) Comment: Frattini's plea for secrecy about his

planned return to Rome for a second Berlusconi administration is probably based on his reluctance to upset his fellow Commissioners and Commission President Barroso. If Berlusconi happens to lose, Frattini would likely retain his position in Brussels. Frattini did not confide the exact position he would hold in Berlusconi II, but if his Presidential prediction pans out, he could step into Letta's place as Berlusconi's right hand.

SEMBLER

NNNN

2005ROME01127 - Classification: CONFIDENTIAL